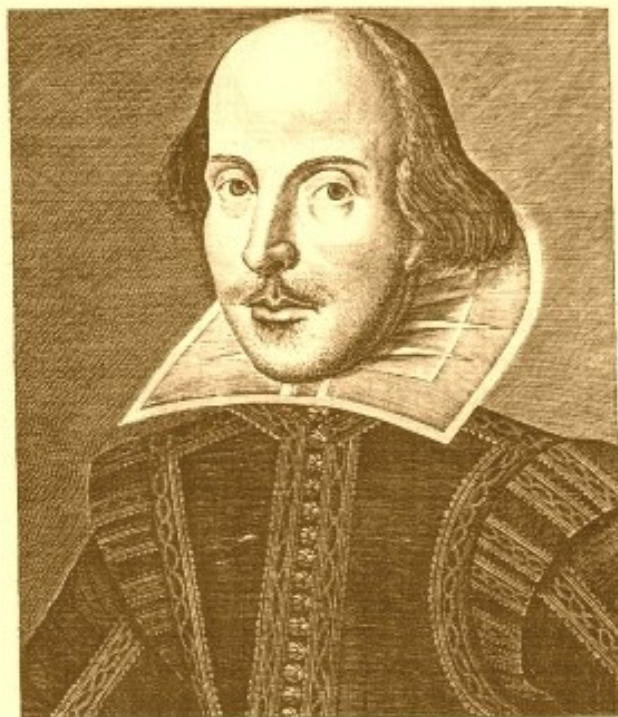


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to Modern English - for contemporary
readers and performers

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Shakespeare For White Trash: Henry IV, Part One

Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney

October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:

“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!

These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.

Main Characters

King Henry IV

Henry, Prince of Wales — the King’s son, known familiarly as Hal or Harry

John — the King’s younger son

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland — formerly a supporter of King Henry, but now turned rebel

Hotspur (nickname of Harry Percy) — son of Henry Percy; formerly a supporter of King Henry, but now turned rebel

Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester — Northumberland’s brother; formerly a supporter of King Henry, but now turned rebel

Earl of Westmoreland — loyal to King Henry

Sir Walter Blunt — loyal to King Henry

Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March — brother-in-law of Hotspur and would-be heir to the throne (see Historical Note below)

Lady Percy — Hotspur’s wife; sister to Edmund Mortimer

Owen Glendower — Welsh rebel leader

Earl of Douglas — Scottish rebel leader

Archbishop of York — on the side of the rebels

Sir Michael — friend of the Archbishop

Sir Richard Vernon — on the side of the rebels

Sir John Falstaff — favourite drinking buddy of Prince Henry; an amusing degenerate

Ned Poins, Bardolph, Peto, and Gadshill — low-life friends of Prince Henry

Mistress Quickly — hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern

Two Carriers (Deliverymen)

Innkeeper

Servant to Hotspur

Sheriff

Chamberlain

(Lady Mortimer is deleted from this version)

(Historical Note: There were actually two Edmund Mortimers, and Shakespeare got them mixed up because he was working from a source that was incorrect. The Edmund Mortimer who appears in the play was Hotspur's brother-in-law and first cousin once-removed to both Henry IV and Richard II. But he was not the Earl of March, who was the heir to the throne designated by Richard. Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, was first cousin twice-removed to both Henry IV and Richard II. He was only a child at the time, but he was, in fact, next in line to the throne based on the rules of succession. In any case, both Edmund Mortimers were ahead of Henry, as they were descendants of Lionel of Antwerp. Lionel ranked ahead of Henry's father, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.)

Gist of the story: *Henry IV, Part One* is the sequel to *Richard II*. In the previous play, we met two of the three Percys — Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and his son Harry "Hotspur" Percy. Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, was referred to. The Percys supported Henry before he was King, when he returned from exile. Now that he has become King, the Percys have fallen out with him, believing that they have been used. They put together a rebel alliance, including the Welsh, the Scots, and the Archbishop of York. But the real star of the play is Prince Henry, or "Hal". He has led a wayward life and is a scandal to the King and the nobles. But when the rebellion arises, he changes completely and shows himself to be a courageous and intelligent leader. The play ends with the battle of Shrewsbury, where Prince Henry meets his nemesis, Hotspur, and kills him. There is still some mopping up to do, but the rebellion has been largely crushed. These events take place around 1402-03.

(As usual, Shakespeare has tweaked history a bit for the sake of the story. He adjusts people's ages and changes the circumstances of deaths. Sir John Falstaff is fictitious but is believed to be based on a real person. An important point to keep in mind in reading Shakespeare's histories is that in those days

there was no such thing as a standing army. Armies had to be raised when needed, and each lord throughout the kingdom could raise his own small army. So, military power was actually very dispersed. If many dissident lords banded together, they could mount a serious rebellion. And forces from outside the kingdom could choose to get involved, too. In preparing this restyling of *Henry IV, Part One*, I worked from four sources — No Fear Shakespeare, Pelican Shakespeare, the New Clarendon Shakespeare, and Brodie’s Notes — and I must pay particular praise to the New Clarendon Shakespeare, which is absolutely first-rate.)

Act 1, Scene 1. *The King’s palace. King Henry comes in with his son John, the Earl of Westmoreland, and others.*

King: Rebellions! Rebellions! Rebellions! I’m getting sick and tired of rebellions! Can’t we have any peace in this country? I should be in the Holy Lands now, cutting the heads off Muslims. I wanted to go a year ago.

Westmoreland: I’m with you, my lord. And the council is sympathetic. But it’s just not the right time. We have problems here. We’ve just gotten word that Lord Mortimer and his men took a beating from that Welsh bastard Glendower. Mortimer is a prisoner, and a thousand of his men were slaughtered.

King: Swell. We can forget about going on any Crusade.

Westmoreland: And there’s more news—from Scotland.

King: Let’s hear it.

Westmoreland: Our friend Harry Percy, alias Hotspur, was in a big battle with the Earl of Douglas. The messenger couldn’t say who won, however.

King: I have more recent news on that. We won. I heard it from Blunt. He rode all the way from Holmedon to tell me. You should have seen him, all covered with mud.

Westmoreland: That’s mighty good news, my lord.

King: Hotspur and his men killed ten thousand Scots—including twenty-two knights.

Westmoreland: That’s awesome.

King: Yeah. And he took some valuable prisoners, too—Douglas’s son Mordake, and Lords Athol, Murray, Angus, and Menteith. What do you think of that?

Westmoreland: Wow! We’ll collect big ransoms for those guys.

King: Harry “Hotspur” Percy. It’s a damn good thing he’s on our side.

Westmoreland: For sure.

King: What a brave kid. I envy his father. Makes me ashamed of my own son.—(To John, patting him on the back) Not you, John. I mean your brother Hal.

John: I know.

King: Two Harrys—one's a hero, and the other's a juvenile delinquent. I wish they could've been switched at birth. Then I would've gotten Hotspur, and the Earl of Northumberland would've gotten Hal.

Westmoreland: Well—maybe he'll grow out of it.

King: But now I have a problem with Harry Percy.

Westmoreland: Oh?

King: He won't send me the prisoners. Only Mordake. That's pretty nervy, don't you think?

Westmoreland: Yes. Absolutely. But I'll tell you who probably put him up to it. His uncle Worcester. He doesn't like you. I think he's using Hotspur as a way of getting back at you.

King: You know, Westmoreland, me and the Percys used to be like that (*Presses two fingers together*).

Westmoreland: I know, sir.

King (Counting on his fingers): Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland—Harry Percy, his son—and Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester. They helped me overthrow King Richard.

(John coughs in embarrassment.)

King: Well, not overthrow exactly—more like—well, you know.

Westmoreland: Yes, my lord, we understand.

King: Anyway, I've sent for Harry the Hotspur. I want an explanation from him. He's basically a good guy, but sometimes his emotions get out of control. Go tell the council we'll meet on Wednesday at Windsor Castle. Then come right back. I've got more to say, but I need to cool off first.

Westmoreland: Right, my lord.

(They leave.)

Act 1, Scene 2. *Prince Henry's room in the palace. Prince Henry comes in with Sir John Falstaff.*

Falstaff: Hal, my good prince, what time is it?

Prince Henry: What time is it? Probably half-way between your last drink and your next one.

Falstaff (Humourously): Oh!—Oh!

Prince Henry: And probably half-way between your last whore and your next one.

Falstaff: Oh!—You got me.

Prince: What does it matter what time it is? You sleep all day.

Falstaff: Well, I have to sleep sometime. I do my best work at night.

Prince Henry: Your best work!—Like robbing people on the highway. You and your gang of thieves.

Falstaff: Oh, now, you mustn't call us that. I prefer to think of us as, um, gentlemen of the night—or the moon's followers.

Prince Henry: Yeah, you'll follow the moon all right—right to the top of the gallows.

Falstaff: Gallows!—Huh!—You wouldn't let me hang. We're friends.

Prince Henry: I don't think there's a rope that would hold your weight anyway.

Falstaff: I hope not. Say, when you become King, will you hang thieves?

Prince Henry: No. I'll let you hang them.

Falstaff: I could do that, I suppose. The hangman always gets some money from the condemned man to make it as painless as possible.

Prince Henry: And you get to keep their clothes. They always shit their pants when they hang.

Falstaff: Oh, stop. You're getting me depressed now.

Prince Henry: Go visit the public sewer ditch. That'll cheer you up.

Falstaff: I swear, I don't know where you get these twisted ideas. I think you're a bad influence on me. Why, just the other day, an old lord came up to me and scolded me for associating with you.

Prince Henry: Ha!

Falstaff: Of course, I didn't listen to him. Still, I would say he spoke wisely.

Prince Henry: Wisdom cries out in the street, but no man listens.

Falstaff: Eh? That sounds vaguely biblical. But anyway, I tell you, Hal, before I met you I was innocent—

Prince Henry: Until proven guilty.

Falstaff: I was as innocent as a lamb. And now look at me.

Prince Henry: I'm looking.

Falstaff: And what do you see?

Prince Henry: A fat, drunken, whoring degenerate-headed straight for hell.

Falstaff: You could be right. But I'll change. You wait and see. I'm going to turn over a new leaf. No more a sinner. No, no. I'll lead a virtuous life. Only good deeds from now on.

Prince Henry: Glad to hear it. So, where do you want to pull your next stick-up job?

Falstaff: Oh! Anywhere! Doesn't matter.

Prince Henry: I thought you were through with sinning.

Falstaff: Stealing isn't a sin. It's a profession. It's no sin for a man to follow his profession.

Prince Henry: Uh-huh.

(Ned Poins comes in.)

Falstaff: Poins! Ah! Now we'll see if Gadshill has a stick-up planned. If a single good deed saved men from hell, Poins would still end up there. He's the greatest thief who ever said "Stick 'em up!"—ha, ha!

Prince Henry: Good morning, Ned.

Poins: Good morning, Prince Hal!—And good morning, fat, drunken bastard Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff: Sir, you flatter me.

Poins: It's not flattery if it's true.—Anyway, listen, here's the deal. At four o'clock tomorrow morning, some travelers will be on the high road on their way to Canterbury Cathedral. They'll be loaded with money. And there'll be merchants with them on the way to London. They'll be carrying money, too. I've got masks. Gadshill is in Rochester, and I've got a dinner reservation tomorrow in Eastcheap. This'll be too easy. How about it?

Falstaff: I'm in.—Hal, how about you?

Prince Henry: I don't need money. I'm the Prince of Wales.

Falstaff: Oh, come on. You don't have to do it for the money. Do it for the sport. Do it for friendship.

Prince Henry: Well, if you put it that way—

Falstaff: That's better! That's what I want to hear!

Prince Henry: On the other hand, there's a book I wanted to finish reading—*Moths Of Wales*.

Falstaff: A book! Oh, my God. I wouldn't want you for a King.

Prince Henry: So what?

Poins: Sir John, let me work on him. You run along.

Falstaff: Fine. You work on him, and don't give up. Vice needs its champions just as much as virtue does. Otherwise, where will England end up? I'm going to Eastcheap to get drunk.

Prince Henry: Yes, you do that.

(Falstaff leaves.)

Poins: I wanted to get rid of him. I have an idea for a cool joke, but I need you to help me.

Prince Henry: Okay, what is it?

Poins: We'll pretend we're going along with Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph, and Gadshill on this robbery. But we'll separate from them just before they do it. We'll watch them do it, and then we'll jump them and steal the money they just stole.

Prince Henry: They'll know it's us, won't they?

Poins: No. We'll wear disguises and leave the horses and go on foot.

Prince Henry: What if they fight us?

Poins: Bah! They're all cream puffs. They'll run. Trust me. And then later, when we meet Falstaff at the pub, we'll let him spin whatever wild story he can think of to explain why he doesn't have the money, and then we'll expose him as a liar. It'll be hilarious.

Prince Henry: That is cool. Okay, meet me in Eastcheap tomorrow. I'll have dinner there.

Poins: Okay. Later, Prince.

(Poins leaves. Prince Henry now comes to front stage and speaks directly to the audience.)

Prince Henry: I know what you're thinking—is this any way for a prince to behave? But you know what? It's all an act. Let everyone think I'm a delinquent—Prince Hal, who won't grow up and who'll never amount to anything. Let them think that. And then—at the right time—there'll be a radical transformation, and the real Prince Henry will suddenly be revealed. Everyone will be so surprised, they'll respect me twice as much as if I'd been good all along. Just wait. You'll see.

(He leaves.)

Act 1, Scene 3. *In the palace. King Henry comes in with Northumberland, Worcester, Hotspur, Sir Walter Blunt, and Attendants.*

King: I've been entirely too nice with you Percys. You think you can walk all over me, but that's going to change.

Worcester: My lord, don't forget that we helped you get where you are today.

Northumberland: Um—my lord—

King: Worcester, don't piss me off. Take a hike. When I need you again, I'll send for you.

Worcester: As you wish, my lord.

(Worcester leaves.)

King: You were going to say something, Northumberland?

Northumberland: Yes, my lord. What I wanted to explain was that it's all a misunderstanding about Harry refusing to send you his prisoners.

Hotspur: That's right, my lord. What happened was that your messenger arrived right after I'd been through a lot of fighting, and it was just bad timing. And this guy was such a fucking fruit with his

nice, clean clothes, and his frilly collar, and shiny shoes, and his snuff box, and his cologne. And my guys are carrying dead bodies, and he goes, “E-w-w-w! That’s so rude! I don’t want to see dead bodies!” I swear, I wanted to punch him in the nose. And then he gives me a hard time about the prisoners, like he’s the boss of me. What an asshole he was. And I said—I don’t know what I said, actually—either he could have the prisoners, or not—I can’t remember. And then he’s telling me he would’ve become a soldier himself, except that he didn’t approve of guns. What a load of horseshit. The guy’s a fucking pansy. You shouldn’t believe anything he told you.

Blunt (To the King): My lord, I think it’s probably a small matter that’s been blown out of all proportion. It’s probably best to forget about it.

King: Except for one thing—young Percy here won’t hand over the prisoners unless I pay the ransom for his brother-in-law, Mortimer—who betrayed me and surrendered to Glendower—and then married Glendower’s daughter! Mortimer’s a traitor, and I’m not paying his ransom. Let him stay in Wales and rot there!

Hotspur: Traitor? He was no traitor! He fought Glendower hand-to-hand, and he has the wounds to prove it!

King: Bullshit. He never fought Glendower. He wouldn’t have the guts to fight Glendower. Now, I don’t want to hear another word about Mortimer. You just send me those prisoners at once—otherwise your King is going to be very angry with all three of you Percys. Understand?

(The King leaves with Blunt and the Attendants.)

Hotspur: That bastard! I’m not sending him any prisoners. I ought to tell him off—

(He moves to follow the King, but Northumberland restrains him.)

Northumberland: Just cool your jets.—Here comes your uncle.

(Worcester returns.)

Hotspur (To Worcester): The King called Mortimer a traitor! Can you believe it? I’d stand with Mortimer any day. I’d put him on the throne and to hell with Henry—the ungrateful creep.

Northumberland (To Worcester): Your nephew’s pissed off with the King.

Worcester: Evidently. Who started it?

Hotspur: He did. He won’t pay Mortimer’s ransom. He doesn’t want him back.

Worcester: I’m not surprised. Mortimer should’ve gotten the throne after Richard.

Hotspur: How is that?

Northumberland: It’s true, son. Richard made Mortimer his heir before he went off to Ireland to fight the rebels. When he came back, Henry was in control of most of England, so Richard had no choice but to surrender the throne to him. Mortimer got squeezed out.

Worcester: And now everyone thinks we're bad guys because we helped Henry come back from exile.

Northumberland: We were used.

Hotspur: Well, we're not bad guys. We may have made a mistake, but we don't deserve to have our names dragged through the mud because of it.—And after all we did for that son of a bitch.

Northumberland: You know, Richard predicted this.

Hotspur: Predicted what?

Northumberland: I saw him when he was being taken to Pomfret Castle to be imprisoned. The last thing he said to me was that King Henry and I would have a falling-out. He said I would feel insufficiently rewarded for all I did for him, and he would treat me with suspicion.

Hotspur: He might decide to hang all three of us. That's why we should get him first—

Worcester: Shh!—Don't say another word.—Harry, I've been considering the matter for some time. I have a plan. There is—what shall I call it?—an enterprise—awaiting us. A risky enterprise. One that will require a great deal of courage.

Hotspur: Courage! That's my middle name, uncle. The only part of me that isn't courage is what goes to the laundry. Hell, I'd grab a lion by the tail just to give people something to talk about. I'd rip the fins off a shark. I'd kill a rhinoceros for a barbecue. You know me.

Worcester: Yeah, yeah, I know you, all right. What I have in mind is something more pertinent—like those Scottish prisoners of yours.

Hotspur: He's not getting them. He can bitch all he wants, but he's not getting a single one.

Worcester: Would you just listen? No, you're not going to send him the prisoners.

Hotspur: Damn right, I'm not. I'd rather carve Mortimer's name over his bed so he has to look at it the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night.

Worcester: Would you just listen?

Hotspur: I just want to get back at that guy any way I can. And that son of his, Prince Hal—that low-life degenerate. I'd poison his beer except that I think the King would be glad to get rid of him.

Northumberland: Just shut up for one minute and let your uncle talk, okay?

Hotspur: Okay. Whatever.

Worcester: Now listen. This is what you're going to do. You're going to take your Scottish prisoners and return them to Douglas, and you're going to make friends with him. He'd love to topple Henry. You and he will put together an army in Scotland. *(To Northumberland)* You, Henry, will go see the Archbishop of York. He has a grudge against the King. The King executed his brother for supporting Richard. He'll be glad to join us. He's got influence. Now, I've already made some preliminary

moves, and I know that there are forces out there that we can reach out to and bring together. It's just a matter of waiting for the right time to strike.

Hotspur: I get it.—Scotland—York—and Mortimer and Glendower.

Worcester: Right. And we have to get started now. The King doesn't regard us as friends any more.

Hotspur: And we're not. That's for sure.

Worcester: Harry, you just wait for my instructions. I'll send you letters. Pretty soon I'll be going to Wales to meet with Glendower and Mortimer. I want to arrange everything so that all the forces come together and strike at the same time. And that'll be the end of King Henry.

Northumberland: Good luck, brother.

Hotspur: This'll be great! I love a good war!

(They all leave.)

Act 2, Scene 1. *An inn-yard in Rochester. A Carrier (delivery man) comes in with a lantern.*

Carrier: Four a.m. already. Time to get going. *(Calls)* Hey, stableman! Get my horse ready!

Stableman (Within): Yeah, yeah.

(A Second Carrier comes in with a lantern.)

Second Carrier: What rotten horse feed they have here. Ever since Robin died, this place has gone to hell.

First Carrier: You said it.

Second: And the fleas! I'm half-eaten alive.

First Carrier: I'm sure I'm three-quarters eaten.

Second Carrier: And they don't even give you a chamber pot. They expect you to piss in the fireplace.

First Carrier: Yeah. And they don't even give you travel rewards. How do they expect people to come back?—What are you carrying?

Second Carrier: Ham and ginger root. Delivering them to Charing Cross.

First Carrier: I've got turkeys to deliver—hopefully still alive.

Second Carrier: Yes, yes. You don't want no dead poultry.

(Gadshill comes in.)

Gadshill: Ah, carriers! Early morning deliveries, eh?

First Carrier: No. We're going to play polo.

Gadshill: Ha, ha!—What time is it?

First Carrier (Suspiciously): Oh—about two, I should think.

Gadshill: Say, lend me your lantern, would you? I want to check on my horse.

First Carrier: Ha!—Lend you my lantern!

Gadshill (To the Second Carrier): Lend me yours, then.

Second Carrier: Sorry, it's against company policy.

Gadshill: Oh, dear.—So, uh, what time do you plan to be in London?

Second Carrier: At the time of our arrival.

Gadshill: Ah. Of course.

Second Carrier (To the First): We'd better go wake up the gentlemen. They want to travel together for safety, since they're carrying valuables.

(Both Carriers leave.)

Gadshill (Calling): Chamberlain! *[Author's note: A male housekeeper]*

(The Chamberlain comes in.)

Chamberlain (Cheerfully): Your trusty chamberlain, sir!

Gadshill: And henchman.

Chamberlain: That, too.

Gadshill: How's it look?

Chamberlain: Just as I told you last night. One guy's a landowner from Kent. He's carrying three hundred marks in gold. And another guy's a tax collector or something. He's carrying a lot of money. They're just having breakfast now.

Gadshill: Mmm—perfect.

Chamberlain: You and some thugs gonna rob 'em on the way, then?

Gadshill: Thugs? Please! I only associate with highly-placed gentlemen who engage in a specialized form of nocturnal commerce.

Chamberlain: They'll be highly-placed, all right—*(Makes a gesture like a man hanged in a noose)* about six feet off the ground—ha, ha.

Gadshill: Not a chance. This is a totally foolproof operation. Nothing bad can happen.

Chamberlain: Don't forget my little reward.

Gadshill: Don't worry. You'll get your little reward. After all, I'm an honest man.

Chamberlain: Oh, that goes without saying sir! Ha, ha!

Gadshill: Tell the stableman to get my horse.

Chamberlain: Yes, yes.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 2. *Nighttime on the high road. [The place name in the original is Gad's Hill.] Prince Henry and Ned Poins come in. [Some texts have Peto and Bardolph come in also, but this confuses Poins's trick. I am disregarding Pelican and No Fear Shakespeare on this point and following instead the New Clarendon Shakespeare. Peto and Bardolph will come in shortly.]*

Poins: I stole Falstaff's horse and hid it in the bushes. He's really pissed.

Prince Henry: Okay. Good. You stay hidden.

(Poins goes out. Falstaff comes in.)

Falstaff: Poins! Where the hell are you?

Prince Henry: Hey, quiet.

Falstaff: Where's Poins?

Prince Henry: He's up on the hill. I'll go look for him.

(Prince Henry pretends to leave but hides instead.)

Falstaff: Fuckin' sons of bitches. I'll bet they hid my horse on purpose. This is the last time I ever go on a job with them. If I have to go on foot, I'll have a heart attack. I don't know why I put up with that prince. A fine way to treat a knight! And I'm a knight!—Poins!—Hal!—Bardolph!—Peto! *(A whistle is heard.)* Where are you guys? Who's got my horse?

(Prince Henry returns with Poins.)

Prince Henry: Stop shouting. You'll ruin everything. Just listen for the travelers.

Falstaff: I need my horse, damn it! Come on, be a good guy. Get me my horse.

Prince Henry: Hey, what am I, your stable boy?

Falstaff: Hal, I'm a knight, for fuck's sake! You can't expect me to do a robbery on foot. How would that look? If I don't get my horse, I'll rat you all out.

(Gadshill comes in. It's dark, so he doesn't recognize the others immediately.)

Gadshill: Don't move, any of you!

Falstaff: I'm not moving without my horse, damn it!

Poins: It's Gadshill.—Gadshill, where's Bardolph and Peto?

Gadshill: They're just coming.

(Bardolph and Peto come in.)

Bardolph: Is everything ready?

Gadshill: Yeah. Everyone put on your masks. The travelers are on the way.

(They put on masks, except for Prince Henry and Poins.)

Falstaff: This better be worth it.

Prince Henry: Oh, it'll be worth it, all right. Now, you four guys wait for them here. Poins and I will wait further down. That way, if they get past you, we'll stop them.

Peto: How many are there?

Gadshill: Eight or ten.

Falstaff: Oh, God! We'll be outnumbered.

Prince Henry: Don't be a wimp.

Falstaff: I want my horse, and I want it now! Where's my goddamn horse?

Poins: Don't worry about your horse. He's out of sight behind the hedge.

Prince Henry (Aside to Poins): You have the disguises?

Poins (Aside to Prince Henry): I got 'em.

(Prince Henry and Poins leave.)

Falstaff (In a commanding voice): Now, men, everyone stand firm. Think of courage. Think of honour. And, above all, think of the money.

(The Travelers come in.)

Thieves: Stick 'em up!

(The Travelers scream.)

Falstaff: Hand over your money, you rich bastards! Don't try to get away or we'll cut your throats!

(The action moves offstage in order to clear the stage for Prince Henry and Poins. We hear cries and complaints offstage. Then Prince Henry and Poins return in disguise and conceal themselves. The thieves return.)

Falstaff: I think we struck it rich, lads. Now let's split it up and get out of here. We'll forget about Hal and Poins. They're such cowards they probably ran home.

(While he's taking out the money, Prince Henry and Poins, disguised, leap out.)

Prince Henry: Freeze! Give us the money!

Poins: Rich bastards!—Let's cut their throats!

(The thieves scream and flee. Falstaff makes a brief, pathetic attempt to fight but then flees, leaving all the money behind.)

Poins: See? I told you it would be easy.

Prince Henry: I'll bet those guys are shitting their pants. And they won't know each other in the dark. They'll think they're being chased.

Poins: Old Fat Jack will have a heart attack.

Prince Henry: I almost feel sorry for him. Did you see him try to fight? What a doofus!

(He imitates Falstaff trying to fight. They leave, laughing.)

Act 2, Scene 3. *Hotspur's castle at Warkworth. Hotspur comes in reading a letter.*

Hotspur (Reading aloud): "I must tell you, sir, as much as I respect you and your family, I cannot be part of your plan. It is dangerous and doomed to fail. You cannot trust your allies. Your timing is wrong. And you simply don't have enough power."—Bastard! I never should have asked him to join us. He's a goddamn coward. I've got all the power I need—Mortimer—York—Glendower—Douglas. They've all agreed to meet me on the ninth.—This guy will probably run off and tell the King now. Well, fuck 'em both. I'm ready to fight any time. I'll leave tonight.

(His wife, Lady Percy, comes in.)

Lady Percy: My dear, what's come over you? You haven't slept with me for two weeks. Something's wrong. I know it.

Hotspur: No, no.

Lady Percy: Oh, yes. I hear you talking in your sleep. You talk as if you were in a battle. It frightens me. You must tell me what's going on. After all, I'm your wife.

Hotspur (Calling): Giles!

(The servant Giles comes in. [In the original, he is not named.])

Servant: Yes, my lord.

Hotspur: Did Gilliams take my letters?

Servant: Yes, my lord. He left an hour ago.

Hotspur: Did Butler bring those horses?

Servant: He brought the brown one, sir.

Hotspur: Good. I'll be wanting him in a few minutes. Tell him to get him ready.

Servant: I will, my lord.

(The Servant leaves.)

Lady Percy: Does this have anything to do with my brother Mortimer? Are you going to help him overthrow the King?

Hotspur: No, no, no—don't be silly.

Lady Percy: If you love me, you'll tell me the truth.

Hotspur: Love! Love! Love! Why do women always resort to that?

Lady Percy: Oh, then you don't love me, do you?

Hotspur: Yes, I love you. All right? You shouldn't doubt it. But right now you just have to trust me. If I don't tell you anything, it's for your own good. I have to go tonight, but I'll send for you as soon as I can. All right?

Lady Percy (Unhappily): All right.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 4. *A room in the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Prince Henry and Poins are drinking.*

Prince Henry: You know, Ned, I know all the waiters in this place. I'm like one of the boys here. I can talk their language. I can joke around with them. I don't act like a prince. You know why?

Poins: Why?

Prince Henry: Any noble can build relationships with other nobles. But very few nobles think about building relationships with the ordinary people. Someday when I'm King, I'll know I can count on these people, and thousands like them.

Poins: That's very wise. You've got your head screwed on straighter than people realize.

(The Innkeeper comes in.)

Innkeeper: My lord, Sir John Falstaff and his friends want to come in. Shall I admit them?

Prince Henry: In a minute. Send the waiter in with some wine when you let them in.

Innkeeper: Very good, sir.

(The Innkeeper leaves.)

Prince Henry: I can't wait to hear what that old walrus has to say about the robbery. This ought to be hilarious.

Poins: That was the best prank of all time. You know, I'll bet young Hotspur never enjoyed a prank in his whole life.

Prince Henry: Oh, hell, no. When he's bored, he wants to kill people. He'll kill fifty Scotsmen before breakfast, then he'll come home for lunch, and then he'll go back out and kill another fifty. And his

wife will say, “Oh, Harry, did you have a nice day killing Scotsmen?” And he’ll say, “Oh, I could’ve killed a lot more, but my horse got tired.”

(Falstaff, Gadshill, Bardolph, and Peto come in, followed closely by a Waiter with wine.)

Poins: Jack! Wassup, dude?

Falstaff: This world is full of cowards! To hell with them! *(To the Waiter)* Pour me some wine, you proletarian.—I don’t know what this world is coming to. *(He drinks.)*

Prince Henry: You look like hell, Jack.

Falstaff (To the Waiter): Hey, there’s lime in this wine! What kind of place are you running here?—Bloody cowards. I swear, there are only three good men in all of England that haven’t been hanged yet, and I’m one of them. What a world!

Prince Henry: What’s the matter, you overdressed block of lard?

Falstaff: And you call yourself a prince! I’ve a good mind to beat you with a stick.

Prince Henry: What for?

Falstaff: For being a coward, that’s what for!—And you, too, Poins!

Poins: Me? Don’t call me a coward, you bag of blubber.

Falstaff: Fine friends you are—both of you. Deserting us in a fight like that. *(He drinks.)* You ought to be ashamed.

Prince Henry: Aw, now, what happened, Sir John?

Falstaff: I’ll tell you what happened. The four of us stole a thousand pounds last night—at least a thousand.

Prince Henry: Oh! Where is it?

Falstaff: I don’t have it. A hundred guys appeared out of nowhere and took it from us.

Prince Henry: A hundred? Oh, my goodness!

Falstaff: I fought with them, mind you. I was in the thick of it with a hozen of those villains for at least two hours. I was mighty lucky to get away.—See here? *(Indicates holes in his clothes)* Here’s where they stabbed me with their swords.—And here—and here.—And here’s another one. And look at my sword, how chewed up it is. *(Shows his sword)* I had to fight like a devil, and it was the best fighting I ever did.—Ain’t that right, fellas?

Gadshill, Peto, and Bardolph: Yeah, yeah.

Prince Henry: Oh, my God. But tell me the whole story from the beginning.

Gadshill: Well, first we jumped the travelers—about a dozen of them.

Falstaff: More like sixteen.

Gadshill: And we tied them up.

Peto: No, we didn't.

Falstaff: Yes, we did.

Gadshill: And then we were counting the money, and about six or seven men jumped us.

Falstaff: And then the rest of them came out of the bushes and attacked us. At least fifty of them came at me personally. They could tell I was the toughest, you see.

Prince Henry: How many did you kill?

Falstaff: Ohh—a couple. You should've seen me, Hal. Here's the way I stood. (*He demonstrates his stance.*) Here's my classic fighting stance—with my sword like this, see? And these four thugs came at me—

Prince Henry: I thought you said a couple.

Falstaff: No! It was four!—And they came at me like wild animals, but I put up my shield and fended off all seven of their swords—

Prince Henry: Seven? You said it was four.

Falstaff: I swear to you it was seven.

Prince Henry (To Poins): It'll go higher. Just wait.

Falstaff: Now, as I was saying, these nine guys wearing buckram—

Prince Henry: Nine, is it?

Falstaff: I fought them off and then I chased them, and like that—wham!—wham!—I cut down seven of them, and the other four got away.

Prince Henry: That makes eleven.

Falstaff: And then another three bastards wearing Kendal green—

Poins: Like Robin Hood!

Falstaff: Yes, that's right.—So they came in from behind and attacked me. It was so dark, I couldn't tell what was happening.

Prince Henry: Then how do you know they were dressed in Kendal green?

Falstaff: What?—Well—I—oh, by instinct, man! Instinct!

Prince Henry: You liar. You dumb-ass. You obese clown.

Falstaff: What! Calling me a liar? Why, you—you—dried-out mackerel!—You wormy apple!—You mutated mouse!—You snot-nosed schoolboy!

Prince Henry: Take it easy. You'll give yourself a stroke. Now shut up for a minute.

Falstaff: All right. What?

Prince Henry: Poin and I saw you rob four travelers and tie them up. And then—we jumped you.

Falstaff: You did?

Prince Henry: Poin and me. And you ran away like a scared rabbit—only not as fast. And you hacked up your sword yourself and cut holes in your clothes to make it look like you'd been in a fight. Didn't you? Now what do you say to that?

(The four thieves look at each other in embarrassment for a moment.)

Falstaff: Oh!—Hell, I knew it was you all the time. That's why I didn't want to hurt you. You know what they say—a lion never attacks royalty because he recognizes himself. Well, my lion instinct kicked in immediately. Anyway, the important thing is, you've got the money. So we're all happy after all, aren't we? Eh?

Gadshill, Peto, and Bardolph: Yeah, yeah.

(The hostess, Mistress Quickly, comes in.)

Mistress Q: Your Highness!

Prince Henry: Our charming hostess, Mistress Quickly.

Mistress Q: My lord, there's a noble from the royal court at the door. He wants to speak to you. Your father sent him.

Prince Henry: Oh, what a bother. Give him a bottle of the cheap stuff and send him home.

Mistress Q: Oh, but sir—

Falstaff: I'll go and get rid of him. Shall I?

Prince Henry: Yes, if you would.—Mistress, stick around a bit.

(Falstaff leaves.)

Prince Henry (To the other thieves): Well, I guess the rest of you must be lions, too, since you ran away from me.

Peto, Bardolph, and Gadshill (Pointing at each other): I was just following him.

Prince Henry: And Falstaff hacked up his own sword and cut his own clothes, right?

Peto: He said you'd be totally convinced.

Bardolph: And he made us scratch our faces with thorns so we'd look like we'd been in a fight.—See?
(Points to his face)

Prince Henry: Oh, yeah. Very convincing.

(Falstaff returns.)

Falstaff: Oh! It's bad news, Hal! That was Bracy. Your father wants you home this morning. There's trouble brewing with Percy and that Welshman Glendower. And Mortimer. And Douglas. There's a thousand Scottish soldiers gathered up there. And Worcester's disappeared. It looks bad. Your father's upset.

Prince Henry (Calmly): Mm—it sounds rather like war, doesn't it?

Falstaff: You don't seem very concerned. Think of it, man! Douglas! Glendower!

Prince Henry: I don't take them too seriously.

Falstaff: Well, you'd better not say that to your father. He won't like that a bit. In fact, you should think about what you are going to say to him.

Prince Henry: All right. Let's pretend you're my father. What'll you say to me?

Falstaff: Oh! Shall I be King, then? Wonderful! I always imagined myself as a king.—Hold on. Let my adjust my throne.—And I need a crown.—Who's got a crown?

(Mistress Quickly is laughing.)

Prince Henry: Never mind. He doesn't wear it all the time. Come on. Just proceed.

Falstaff: Ahem (Coughs)—Now, then—Hold on, I need some wine. *(He drinks. To Mistress Quickly)* It's all right, my Queen. Don't cry.

(Mistress Quickly is laughing out of control.)

Falstaff: She's overcome with emotion. Someone take the Queen out.

Prince Henry (To Mistress Q): The King will join you in bed later, so get ready.

(She goes out laughing uncontrollably.)

Falstaff: Ahem!—Now, then, Harry—I am very unhappy about the way you are wasting your youth and about the bad company you keep. You're supposed to be my son. At least, your mother insists you are, and I have no reason to dispute it. Now, it makes me very sad to hear people say bad things about you—especially since some of those things might be true. Now, as I said, I don't approve of the company you keep—with one exception. There's one fine gentleman, very noble, very virtuous. I forget his name.

Prince Henry: What does he look like?

Falstaff: A fine-looking man. A bit stout. Very cheerful. Noble bearing and all that. In his fifties, I'd say. He radiates what I would call a strong character. He's quite remarkable, really.

Prince Henry: Perhaps you mean Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff: Falstaff! Yes, yes, he's the one! Why, as sure as you can tell a tree from its fruit or a cactus from its spines, you can tell from his face that he's—he's—mm—one hell of a fellow. That's right. And my advice is to break off with everyone else and stick with him. He's a good influence, no doubt of that.—Now—where have you been for the past month?

Prince Henry: All wrong. Totally unconvincing. You could never be a king. Tell you what—you be me, and I'll be the King.

Falstaff: Well, that was a short reign if I ever had one. Quite unfair to overthrow me before I've had a chance to demonstrate my royal talents.

Prince Henry: Never mind. I'm the King, and you're me.

Falstaff: Yes, yes. *(To the others)* You'll see how well I do this.

Prince Henry: Now, then, Harry, where have you been?

Falstaff: In Eastcheap, my lord.

Prince Henry: That's not a fit neighbourhood for a prince. I've been hearing some very negative things about you.

Falstaff: Lies. All lies. Don't believe any of it. *(To the others)* You see? I'm good at this.

Prince Henry: Don't try to hide the truth from me. There is one particular man who is a very bad influence on you. He's a fat, drunken slob who stuffs himself like a pig, patronizes prostitutes, gambles, doesn't pay his debts, lives by thieving, and contributes absolutely nothing to society. In short, he's a low-down, good-for-nothing parasite and a sinner.

Falstaff: Oh?—I don't know whom you could possibly be referring to.

Prince Henry: I'm referring to that corrupt, old bastard Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff: You mean good, old Jack Falstaff? Well, in fact, I do know him. But all those things you said about him aren't true at all.

Prince Henry: Oh, no?

Falstaff: No-o-o-o. Not in the least. He's really a very sweet, kind fellow. Everyone calls him Honest Jack—or Jolly Jack—or even Brave Jack. Everyone loves him, really. Perhaps he has his little vices and indulgences, but then, who doesn't? I wouldn't dream of breaking off with him. I could get rid of the others, if you insist, but not dear, old Jack. To throw him away would be like throwing away civilization itself.

Prince Henry: No, it would be like throwing away a box of old cat litter.

(Knocks are heard offstage.)

Falstaff: Who's that? Somebody go check.

(Bardolph goes out and comes back almost immediately.)

Bardolph: It's the sheriff and some officers!

Falstaff: Tell him not now. We're acting a play.

(Mistress Quickly comes in.)

Mistress Q: My lord, the sheriff and his officers have come to search the premises. What should I do?

Falstaff: Hal, you wouldn't rat me out, would you? I'm your friend.

Prince Henry: All right. Go hide behind the screen.—Poins, you stay here.—Everyone else just go back and blend in with the crowd.—Mistress, you can send the sheriff in.

(Falstaff hides, and everyone else leaves except for Poins. [Author's note: The Pelican edition and No Fear Shakespeare both have Peto staying instead of Poins, but that can't be right. The New Clarendon Shakespeare has Poins staying, and I'm sure they're right.] After a moment, the Sheriff comes in with an Officer. [In the original, the Sheriff comes in with a Carrier.])

Sheriff: Sorry to bother you, my lord, but it seems there was a robbery on the high road, and some citizens said the robbers came into this tavern.

Prince Henry: Really?—Huh.—Do you know who they are?

Sheriff: One of them is apparently a regular here. Older man—fat—seedy—disreputable sort.

Prince Henry: Oh, yes, I know who you mean. He isn't here now. I sent him on an errand. But I promise you that I'll send him to you tomorrow, and he'll answer all your questions.

Sheriff: I would appreciate that, my lord. Two of the victims were robbed of three hundred marks.

Prince Henry: Well, if my friend had anything to do with it, he'll have to deal with the law. I promise you that everything will be straightened out one way or another. All right, then?

Sheriff: Yes. Thank you, my lord.

Prince Henry: So, good night, then, Sheriff.

Sheriff: Yes, good night, my lord. Thank you.

(The Sheriff and Officer leave.)

Prince Henry: Tell the fat bastard he can come out now.

(Poins pulls back the screen. Falstaff is sleeping.)

Poins: He's asleep.

Prince Henry: What a champion. See what's in his pockets.

(Poins takes a paper out of Falstaff's pocket.)

Poins: There's a bill here.

Prince Henry: Read it.

Poins (Reading): “A chicken—two shillings and two pence. Sauce—four pence. Two gallons of wine—five shillings and eight pence. Anchovies and dessert wine—two shillings and six pence. And bread—a halfpenny.”

Prince Henry: You are what you eat.

Poins: What do you mean?

Prince Henry: It’s a new saying. I just coined it.—Save that bill. I’m going to frame it. And save everything else from his pockets. It might prove useful. We’ll let Jolly Jack sleep it off. I’ve got to be at the court in the morning. There’s a war coming, you know.

Poins: Yes.

Prince Henry: It’s serious business now, Ned. You know that.

Poins: Yes, I do.

Prince Henry: We’ve had our fun. Now it’s time to transform. Follow me?

Poins: Yes.

Prince Henry: I’m going to give you a position of responsibility.

Poins: Thank you, my lord. I won’t let you down.

Prince Henry: I’ll even give the fat bastard a company of soldiers to command. After all, he’s a knight. We’ll see if he can keep up with them.

Poins: What about the stolen money, my lord?

Prince Henry: I’m going to return it—with interest.—Come on.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 1. [*Author’s note: This scene takes place either at Glendower’s castle in Wales, or at the home of the Archdeacon in Bangor, depending on which text you’re reading. My sources don’t agree. Either way, it doesn’t matter to the reader or audience.*] Glendower, Mortimer, Worcester, and Hotspur come in.

Mortimer: Everything’s unfolding as it should. I’d say we’re off to a good start.

Hotspur: We still have to decide how we’re going to divide up the country.—Oh, damn. I forgot my map.

Glendower: It’s okay, I’ve got the map we need. Have a seat, cousin Hotspur. [*Author’s note: “Cousin” in Shakespeare is often used very loosely. Hotspur’s brother-in-law, Mortimer, is Glendower’s son-in-law.*] That’s what the King calls you. And whenever he says it, he looks pale and wishes you were in heaven—ha, ha.

Hotspur: And whenever he hears the name Owen Glendower, he wishes you were in hell.

Glendower: Of course. After all, the day I was born, the sky was full of meteors, and there was an earthquake.

Hotspur: Nature sometimes makes strange phenomena, but it has nothing to do with a particular person being born.

Glendower (Somewhat offended): Are you disputing what I say? The day I was born, heaven and earth announced it with extraordinary signs. And extraordinary signs are given to extraordinary men. There isn't a man anywhere who can say he taught me anything—especially when it comes to magic. I know as much about the occult arts as anyone who ever lived.

Hotspur: And you speak the best Welsh, too.—Say, I'm hungry. I could go for an O Henry.—O Henry? Get it?—Ha, ha.

Mortimer: Knock it off, Harry.

Glendower: I can summon up spirits from hell.

Hotspur: And I can send them back just as fast.

Mortimer: Stop it now.

Glendower: Listen, three times King Henry brought an army to fight me, and three times I kicked him out.

Hotspur: Yes, yes. But he's still King, and you're not.

Mortimer: Harry!—(To *Glendower*) Uh, we were going to look at the map, I believe.

Glendower: Yes. (He lays down the map.) We should divide everything by thirds, as we agreed.

Mortimer: The Archdeacon has saved us the trouble. He's made the divisions—for our approval, of course.—This part here, southeast of the Trent and Severn rivers, goes to me.—All of Wales, and everything west of the Severn, including this land here, goes to you, *Glendower*.—And Harry, you get all this from the Trent northward. Everything's being written down now in three copies for our signatures. Tomorrow, Harry, you and I and Worcester can set off to meet your father and the Scottish army at Shrewsbury. *Glendower* isn't ready yet, but that's okay because you'll need some time to raise an army in your area.

Hotspur: Hold on. I'm not sure I like my share. Look at the way the Trent curls in like this, and I lose this land here. That's no good. I'll have to dig a canal and have the Trent go across here instead.

Glendower: What? You're going to divert the river?

Mortimer: Harry, it cuts into my part just as much as it cuts into yours.

Glendower: Nobody's going to divert the damn river.

Hotspur: Well, I intend to. Why, are you going to stop me?

Glendower: Yes.

Hotspur: Try saying it in Welsh. I don't like the sound of it in English.

Glendower: I was raised in an English court, and I'll speak English to you. I've even composed songs in English—something you've never done.

Hotspur: Oh! Songs! Well! Now we won't have to hire a minstrel.

Mortimer: Harry!

Glendower (Containing his anger): Fine. Change the damn river, if it means so much to you.

Hotspur: Nahh—On second thought, I don't care. I'll sign the agreement.

Glendower: I'll see if the copies are ready.

(Glendower leaves.)

Mortimer: He's really pissed off with you, and I don't blame him.

Hotspur: Aw, fuck him. Him and his signs and his magic tricks. He's a fucking provincial bore.

Mortimer: You're wrong about him. He's an extremely learned man. And furthermore, he respects you. If anyone else had been as insulting as you were, he'd have picked him up and thrown him out the door.

Hotspur: Aww—

Mortimer: You've pushed him to the limit of his goodwill. Don't push him beyond it.

Worcester: Harry, you're the bravest nephew an uncle ever had, but you have no sense of diplomacy. You're stubborn, you're arrogant, and you're temperamental. These are not the qualities one expects from a gentleman.

Hotspur: Thank you for the lesson, uncle. If good manners guarantee success, your success is guaranteed.

(Glendower returns.)

Glendower: The three copies of the agreement are just being finished. We'll sign them, and then we can get going.

Mortimer: Finally! Let's go.

(They all leave.)

Act 3, Scene 2. *In the King's palace. The King and Prince Henry come in.*

King: I can only think that you're God's punishment for my sins. There's no other explanation for how a prince could turn out like you.

Prince Henry: If you give me a chance, I'll prove to you I'm not what other people say I am. And whatever indiscretions I may have committed, you'll be willing to forgive them.

King: Maybe God will forgive you. But I feel you've disgraced me. Polite people don't want anything to do with you. Your brother sits on the council instead of you, even though he's younger. The other councillors don't want you. Who are your friends? A bunch of zeroes. If I'd behaved like that at your age, where would I be today? Still in exile. A royal mustn't mingle with the lower class. It makes you look foolish. Right now the only one around here who still wants to look at you—is me.

Prince Henry: Then look at me, and I'll make you proud of what you see.

King: When I look at you, I automatically compare you to young Percy—Hotspur. He's more like a prince than you are. He's the same age as you, but he's leading an army. He beat Douglas and then made an ally of him. He's got the Archbishop of York on his side, and Mortimer, and Glendower. He's a devil on the battlefield. He's a leader.—Frankly, I wouldn't be too surprised if you went over to his side.

Prince Henry: You're so wrong. Percy may stand tall now, but he's destined to fall, and I'm destined to rise to where he is now. He has all the glory today, but I'm going to take it from him. This I promise you, in the name of God. And I would die a thousand times before I broke that promise.

(There is a pause here as King Henry looks at his son. He is starting to change his mind about him. He puts his hands on the Prince's shoulders.)

King: I think you really mean it. All right, I'm going to give you a chance. I'm going to give you an army to command.

(Sir Walter Blunt comes in.)

King: Blunt, is anything wrong?

Blunt: My lord, I've received word from Scotland that Douglas met with the English rebels at Shrewsbury on the eleventh. They'll have a very big army with all the allies they've got.

King: It's old news by now. Westmoreland left today with my son John. *(To Prince Henry)* You'll leave on Wednesday, and I'll follow on Thursday. We'll rendezvous at Bridgenorth with all our forces twelve days from now. We both have a lot to do, so we'd better get busy.

(They leave.)

Act 3, Scene 3. *A room in the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Falstaff and Bardolph come in.*

Falstaff: Bardolph, look at me. I'm losing weight. I'm the incredible shrinking man. I'd better go to church and confess my sins before I disappear completely.

Bardolph: Confess your sins? That would take a long time. Even a bishop wouldn't have that much patience.

Falstaff: Now don't exaggerate. I've lived a fairly normal life for a gentleman—more or less. I never swore too damn much. I didn't gamble.—Not every day, anyway. I never went to a whorehouse unless it was absolutely necessary. And I always paid my debts—or at least I intended to.

(Mistress Quickly comes in.)

Falstaff: Ah! Mistress Quickly. Have you found out who picked my pockets last night?

Mistress Q: No one knows anything about it, Sir John. I assure you, this is an honest establishment.

Falstaff: So you say! I've been robbed, and someone here is responsible.

Mistress Q: I think you're just trying to get out of paying your bills.

Falstaff: Who, me?

Mistress Q: Yes, you. You owe me for food, you owe me for wine, you owe me for cash advances, and you owe me for a dozen shirts you asked me to buy.

Falstaff: I lost my grandfather's sealing ring. It was worth forty marks.

Mistress Q: Forty marks! That ring was made of copper. I heard the Prince say so.

Falstaff: Oh, the Prince said so, did he? Well, he's a liar. If he were here right now, I'd give him a fine slap on the head for that.

(Prince Henry and Poins come in, marching. [Author's note: The Pelican edition and No Fear Shakespeare both have Prince Henry coming in with Peto—another mistake. The New Clarendon Shakespeare has it right.] Falstaff, embarrassed, becomes very charming.)

Falstaff: Oh! My lord Prince! My good lad! Practising at marching, eh? Splendid!

Mistress Q: My lord! He said—

Falstaff: Never mind!—Hal, I've been robbed. Somebody picked my pockets last night while I was sleeping. I had over a hundred pounds in IOU's and my grandfather's sealing ring.

Prince Henry: That piece of junk?

Mistress Q. (To Falstaff): Ha! I told you! *(To Prince Henry)* My lord, he said he'd give you a fine slap on the head.

Prince Henry: Ah—really?

Falstaff: Don't listen to this whore.

Mistress Q: Whore?—Why you—Listen, you may be a knight, but you're still a bastard to call me such a thing!

Bardolph: That's telling him.

Falstaff: Shut up, you.

Mistress Q. (To Prince Henry): And you know what else, my lord? The other day he said you owed him a thousand pounds.

Prince Henry: Is that a fact?

Falstaff: No, no, no. She misunderstood. I meant that you owed me your love, and that was worth a thousand pounds—um, if not a million—in a manner of speaking.

Prince Henry: And you're going to give me a slap on the head, are you?

Falstaff: Did I say such a thing, Bardolph?

Bardolph: Yes, you did.

Falstaff: Don't listen, Hal. Would I—of all people—so much as touch a hair on your head? If I'm lying, I pray to God to—um—to make my underwear shrink in the laundry so that it is exceedingly uncomfortable to wear—thereafter.

Prince Henry: Jack, you're such a liar. A liar and a cheat. You want to know who picked your pockets? Poin and I did. And what did we find? Nothing of value. Just unpaid bills.

Falstaff (Feigning surprise): Really?—Oh!—What a relief! *(To Mistress Q.)* You're forgiven, then. Just a silly misunderstanding—ha, ha, ha. *(Coughs)* Um, do you suppose I could have some breakfast?

(Mistress Q. gives him an appropriate look and goes out.)

Falstaff: Hal, what about the money?

Prince Henry: Money? What money?

Falstaff: You know—the money—from the, uh—robbery.

Prince Henry: Oh, that. I gave it all back to the travelers.

Falstaff: Oh, damn! You didn't!—All that work for nothing.—But you can rob the treasury, can't you? Nobody would know.

Prince Henry: Now get serious for once. I've gotten you an infantry company to command.

Falstaff: Infantry? Oh, please, Hal. My poor feet couldn't take it.

Prince Henry: Bardolph, I have two letters for you to carry. *(Hands him the letters)* This one is for Lord John, my brother.—And this one's for Westmoreland.

Bardolph: Yes, my lord!

(Bardolph leaves.)

Prince Henry: Jack, you be at the Temple Hall at two o'clock tomorrow. I'll give you a list of troops to call up and some money. We're in a real war. Either we kill Percy, or he kills us.

Falstaff: Splendid! I feel inspired! *(Looking around)* I wish we could do it right here. It's so comfortable.

(They leave.)

Act 4, Scene 1. *The rebel camp near Shrewsbury. Hotspur, Worcester, and Douglas come in.*

Hotspur: My lord Douglas, don't take this as flattery, because I don't flatter. I tell the truth. There's no one else on earth I'd rather have as my ally than you. I'd gladly join my fate to yours.

Douglas: And I to yours, sir. You are the most honourable man I know.

(A Messenger comes in with a letter.)

Messenger: Sir, this letter is from your father.

Hotspur: A letter? Why isn't he here?

Messenger: He's very sick, sir.

Hotspur: Sick? At a time like this? What about his army?

Messenger: I don't know, sir. His letter will explain.

Worcester: Is he in bed?

Messenger: Yes, sir. He's been in bed for four days. The doctors are very worried.

Worcester: Damn. We need him.

Hotspur (Perusing the letter): He says he wasn't able to gather his allies in time because of his illness. He says we should press on anyway since the King knows all about us.

Worcester: We're at a disadvantage without him.

Hotspur: It's not that bad. We'll still have his forces in reserve if we need them.

Douglas: Yes. We should carry on as we are.

Worcester: What will our men think if Northumberland isn't here? They might think he's holding back deliberately. They might have second thoughts about the whole thing.

Hotspur: No, I don't think so. If we carry on without him, that'll show we're confident. And anyway, his army will join us later.

Douglas: Yes.

(Sir Richard Vernon comes in.)

Hotspur: Vernon! You're a sight for sore eyes, cousin!

Vernon: I have some news, my lord. I just hope it doesn't upset you.

Hotspur: All right, what?

Vernon: The Earl of Westmoreland is marching against us with seven thousand men. And Prince John is with him.

Hotspur: Big deal.

Vernon: And the King himself intends to follow with a big army.

Hotspur: Let him bring it. And what about Prince Hal? Is he going to round up all his drinking buddies and bring them along to fight?

Vernon: Yes, as a matter of fact. And I've never seen the Prince of Wales dressed for battle before. You'd hardly recognize him. He looks—magnificent.

Hotspur: Magnificent!—I don't care how magnificent he looks! The Prince of Wales can eat my shit! When I see him, it'll be one-on-one, sword against sword—until one of us is dead!—Where the hell is Glendower?

Vernon: I also have news about Glendower, although it's second-hand news.

Hotspur: What?

Vernon: He's been delayed. He won't have his army assembled for another two weeks.

Douglas: Tsk!—That's no good.

Worcester: We can't wait for him.

Hotspur: How many men does the King have?

Vernon: Thirty thousand.

Worcester: Oh, God.

Hotspur: Numbers don't matter. *(Pounds his heart with his fist)* This is what matters. Let's get the troops ready. I refuse to be afraid. If we die, we die smiling.

Douglas: Don't even speak of death. Let our enemies speak of it.

(Hotspur pats him on the shoulder, and they all leave.)

Act 4, Scene 2. *On the road to Coventry. Falstaff and Bardolph come in.*

Falstaff: Bardolph, you go on ahead to Coventry and fill this bottle with wine for me. *(Hands him a large bottle)*

Bardolph: Give me some money, then.

Falstaff: Pay for it out of your own pocket. I'll reimburse you later.

Bardolph: Why, this is a good ten shillings worth.

Falstaff: Yes, yes. Spend as much as you need to. I'm good for it. And tell my lieutenant Peto to meet me at the city limits.

Bardolph: All right, Captain.

(Bardolph goes out.)

Falstaff: If I don't know how to make a profit out of a war, then I'm a pickled herring. The treasury pays me three hundred pounds and tells me to draft a hundred and fifty men. So what do I do?—Heh,

heh. Clever Falstaff.—I draft a bunch of men who absolutely don't want to fight but who have enough money that they can buy their way out of military service. And where does that money go? In my pocket, of course. Then I draft a hundred and fifty poor, miserable bastards—most of them out of the prisons. Not one of them even has a proper shirt on his back, but that's okay because they can steal other people's laundry from the hedges on the way.

(Prince Henry and the Earl of Westmoreland come in.)

Prince Henry: Captain Jack. Wassup?

Falstaff: Hal! What are you doing here?—And Lord Westmoreland. Hello.—I thought you'd be at Shrewsbury by now.

Westmoreland: We should all be there. My army's there, and so is the King.

Falstaff: Oh, I'll be there, quick as a thief.

Prince Henry: Yes. So I would expect.—Um, are those your soldiers? *(Indicating offstage.)*

Falstaff: Yes. Every last one of them.

Prince Henry: They're the most pathetic excuses for soldiers I've ever seen.

Falstaff: Never mind. Every one of them is fit enough to stop a sword or a bullet.

Westmoreland: But they look like beggars. They're all skin and bones.

Falstaff: Whether they beg or not is no concern of mine. And as for their physiques, don't blame me. If they ate properly, they wouldn't look like that.

Prince Henry: Indeed.—Anyway, we have to get moving. Percy and his forces are already in the field.

Falstaff: Oh! Well! Lead on, then!

(They all leave, but Falstaff lags behind.)

Falstaff: Last to the battle and first to the dinner table. That's my motto.

(He leaves.)

Act 4, Scene 3. *In the rebel camp near Shrewsbury. Hotspur, Worcester, Douglas, and Vernon come in.*

Hotspur: I say we attack tonight.

Worcester: No. We're not ready.

Vernon: Worcester's right.

Douglas: Don't be a wimp.

Vernon: Me? A wimp? When we go into battle tomorrow, you'll see I'm no wimp.

Douglas: Fine. Then let's go tonight.

Hotspur: Yeah. I'm psyched up.

Vernon: Hold on, fellas. Let's try to be rational about this. My cousin's cavalry hasn't arrived yet. Worcester's cavalry only just arrived. They're tired. They need time to rest.

Hotspur: The enemy's just as tired. Most of our forces are rested enough.

Worcester: But the King outnumbers us. We have to wait until we have all our men.

(A trumpet sounds. Sir Walter Blunt comes in, with the Earl of Westmoreland. [Author's note: I have added Westmoreland to the scene because he is referred to but isn't seen in the original.])

Blunt: We come in peace with an offer of peace from the King.

Hotspur: Sir Walter Blunt—Lord Westmoreland—welcome. I wish you were on our side instead of the enemy's.

Blunt: To us, you're the enemy. We will always be loyal to the King. But I didn't come to argue. The King wants to know what your grievances are. If he has failed you in any way, he will make it up to you. And he will pardon you and your allies if you will stop this rebellion.

Hotspur: The King's good at saying whatever needs to be said at any given time. When he came back from exile, he said it was only to reclaim his estate, which had been stolen from him by King Richard. And who was the first to take his side? The Percys—me, my father, and my uncle. And it was because we stood by him that everyone else of any importance came over to his side, too. But then he took advantage of all that power to steal the throne from Richard. And once he was on the throne, he killed Richard and almost all of his supporters. We never intended to be accessories to murder.

Blunt: I didn't come here for a history lesson. I came with a peace offer.

Hotspur: I have more to say. When his cousin Mortimer was captured in Wales, he wouldn't pay the ransom to get him back. And why? Because Mortimer was actually next in line to the throne after Richard. And because Mortimer was my brother-in-law, the King had me spied on. He kicked my uncle off the council, and he kicked my father out of the court. It was obvious that he was no longer our friend. So we raised this army for our own protection and to challenge his claim to the throne.

Blunt (Angrily): Is this the answer you want me to take back to the King?

Hotspur: No.—Tell him we'll think it over. My uncle will present our demands to the King tomorrow. Westmoreland will stay here as a hostage to guarantee my uncle's safe return.

Blunt: I sincerely hope that you accept the King's offer of peace.

Hotspur: Maybe we will—and maybe we won't.

Blunt: I pray that you do.

(They leave.)

Act 4, Scene 4. *The palace of the Archbishop of York. The Archbishop comes in with Sir Michael.*

Archbishop: Sir Michael, I need you to deliver these letters right away. *(Hands him letters)* This one's for the Lord Marshal.—This one's for my cousin Scroop.—And there are a few others.

Sir Michael: I can guess what's in them.

Archbishop: I'm sure you can. We've got ten thousand men to fight against the King, and he's got a lot more. We don't have Northumberland, and we don't have Glendower. He believes in signs, you see.

Sir Michael: Glendower does?

Archbishop: Yes. He sees signs everywhere. And apparently a sign warned him to stay out of the battle. Without him and Northumberland, I have very little confidence that Harry Percy can win with the forces he's got.

Sir Michael: But you're forgetting Douglas and Mortimer.

Archbishop: Mortimer's not there.

Sir Michael: But he's still got Mordake, and Vernon, and Worcester, and a lot of good soldiers.

Archbishop: The King's got more, and they're very experienced.

Sir Michael: Percy will give them a good fight anyway.

Archbishop: A good fight, yes. But can he win? That's the big question. If the King wins, he'll come after us. We must make certain provisions, otherwise it could turn into a disaster. Now you get going with those letters. I have some more to write.

Sir Michael: I will, your Grace.

(They leave.)

Act 5, Scene 1. *The King's camp near Shrewsbury. The King, Prince Henry, Prince John, Sir Walter Blunt, and Falstaff come in.*

King: Look. Red sky at morning. You know what that means.

Prince Henry: A storm.

King: A storm for the losers, not for us.

(A trumpet. Worcester and Vernon come in.)

King: Lord Worcester. It's unfortunate that we have to meet under these circumstances. We used to be friends. But you and your allies have stirred up a rebellion for no good reason. Now, will you be sensible and come to terms, or will you persist in this foolishness?

Worcester: Your Majesty, I would be perfectly happy to stay at home and spend the rest of my life quietly growing old. I'm not responsible for any of this.

Falstaff: No, you simply found a rebellion you liked and signed on to it.

Prince Henry: Shh!

Worcester: Your Majesty, our family was once your friends, as you acknowledge. We welcomed you and helped you when you returned from exile to reclaim your estate. You assured us that that was your sole intention. But you lied to us. You took advantage of your power to overthrow Richard. And after that, you turned against us. What else could we do but take up arms to protect ourselves?

King: I've heard all this bullshit before. It's just propaganda to rouse up all the malcontents in England and our old enemies in Scotland and Wales.

Prince Henry (To Worcester): If we go to war, a lot of people will die unnecessarily. Your nephew is a little too hot-headed. He shouldn't be dragging everyone into a war. Now, I respect him. We all respect him. He's made quite a name for himself. In fact, most people have a higher opinion of him than they have of me. So what I propose is this—I'll fight your nephew in one-on-one combat to settle this whole thing. That'll save thousands of lives.

King (To Prince Henry): No, I don't want to take that chance.—Worcester, there's no reason for anyone to die. I'd sooner have peace. But I think your nephew is spoiling for a fight. Nobody doubts his courage, but he lacks maturity. You're his uncle. You're older and wiser. You must reason with him. I want you to go back and tell him and all your allies that if they accept my offer of peace, we can all be friends again. But if your nephew is stubborn, we'll fight, and we'll win. Our forces are superior.

Worcester: I will tell him, your Majesty.

(Worcester and Vernon leave.)

Prince Henry: He won't agree. He's itching to fight. He and Douglas both. They think they can win.

King: Well, if we have to fight, you all know your duties. I want to be ready to strike as soon as I know what their intentions are.

(The King goes out with Prince John and Blunt.)

Falstaff: Hal, if I go down in battle, you'll protect me, won't you? After all, we're friends.

(Prince Henry gives him an unsympathetic look.)

Prince Henry: I expect that I'll be too busy.

Falstaff: Aw, Hal, don't say that.

Prince Henry: Do you have one single ounce of honour in that fat body of yours?

(Prince Henry leaves.)

Falstaff: Honour!—Pfff!—What the hell good is honour? Can you use it to stick a leg back on?—Fucking hell.—Honour is something to console a widow with.—So sorry, madam, but at least Charlie died with honour. *(Pretends to talk to a body in a casket)* Hear that, Charlie? You died with honour. Make you feel any better? *(Cups his ear)* Eh? Speak up. Can't hear you.—What's honour? It's a word, that's all. A nice word—but not a word to die for. Only fools die for honour.

(He leaves.)

Act 5, Scene 2. *Worcester and Vernon return to the rebel camp near Shrewsbury.*

Worcester: Listen, Sir Richard, I don't want my nephew to know that the King is offering peace.

Vernon: Why not?

Worcester: Because if we patch up with the King now, he'll find some excuse to get even with us later. In his mind we'll always be traitors, don't you see? We'll never be safe. My nephew might be forgiven on account of his youth—but who influenced him? Me and his father. We're the ones who'll hang. So for God's sake, don't say a word about the peace offer. You just back me up, all right?

Vernon: Okay, if you say so.

(Hotspur and Douglas come in, with Soldiers.)

Hotspur: So, you're back, uncle. What did the King say?

Worcester: He wants to fight.

Douglas: Well, that settles that.

Hotspur: Send Westmoreland back with our answer. We'll fight.

Douglas: I'll do that.

(Douglas leaves.)

Worcester: The King refuses to show us any mercy.

Hotspur: I hope you didn't beg for any.

Worcester: No, no. I just explained to him very politely what our grievances were, and he called us a bunch of traitors and said he'd destroy us.

Vernon: Yes, that's right.

(Douglas returns.)

Douglas: Done. Westmoreland is on his way back to the King. We should gear up and get ready to do battle.

Worcester (To Hotspur): The Prince of Wales wanted to challenge you to a duel to settle everything.

Hotspur: Oh! If only!—How did he say it? Was he insulting?

Vernon: Not at all. He praised you very highly—even above himself. He really quite surprised me. What a changed man he is. Such a gentleman.

Hotspur: Don't let him fool you. He's a degenerate. I'll kill him. *(To the Others)* Everybody get ready. Think about what you have to do. I'm not going to give any pep talks. You don't need any.

(A Messenger comes in.)

Messenger: My lords, the King is moving to attack.

Hotspur (Drawing his sword): Gentlemen, before this day is over, I'll have royal blood on this sword.—Sound the trumpets!—I love trumpet music.

(Trumpets sound. They all leave.)

Act 5, Scene 3. *The battlefield near Shrewsbury. Sounds of battle. Douglas and Blunt come in from opposite sides. Blunt is disguised as the King, and a visor covers his face.*

Blunt: Stop! Who are you?

Douglas: I'm Douglas. And I know who you are from your colours. You're the King.

Blunt: Yes.

Douglas: Your friend Lord Stafford is dead. I thought he was you because he was dressed like you, so I killed him. Now you surrender to me!

Blunt: I wouldn't surrender to you, you bloody Scotsman!

(They fight. Douglas kills Blunt. Then Hotspur comes in.)

Hotspur: Douglas, you're unbeatable today!

Douglas: We've won! I just killed the King!

(Hotspur lifts Blunt's visor.)

Hotspur: It's not the King. It's Sir Walter Blunt.

Douglas: He said he was the King. And he's wearing the King's colours.

Hotspur: Brave guy. Apparently there are several decoy kings out on the battlefield to confuse us.

Douglas: Then I'll kill them all until I find the real one.

Hotspur: I think we're going to win. Come on.

(They leave. More trumpets. Then Falstaff comes in by himself.)

Falstaff: Fuck me. I should be back in the Boar's Head, eating and drinking—not here. *(Sees Blunt's body)* Oh, shit.—Sir Walter Blunt.—This is what honour looks like.—No, thank you.—All my guys are dead or ran away. I've got nobody left to command.

(Prince Henry comes in, without a sword.)

Prince Henry: Falstaff, give me your sword! We're fighting for our lives, man!

Falstaff: It's all right, Hal. I killed Harry Percy. You should've seen it. I was brilliant.

Prince Henry: You're full of shit. Percy's alive. Now give me your sword.

Falstaff: Oh, no, no! I'm keeping my sword. But you can have my gun. Go ahead, take it.

(Prince Henry reaches into Falstaff's holster and pulls out a bottle of wine.)

Prince Henry: What the fuck?

(He throws the bottle at Falstaff and leaves.)

Falstaff: If Percy's alive, I'll get him. But he has to find me. I'm not going to look for him. I don't want to end up like Blunt.

(He leaves.)

Act 5, Scene 4. *Elsewhere on the battlefield. Sounds of battle. Soldiers skirmish across the stage. Then the King, Prince Henry, Prince John, and the Earl of Westmoreland come in.*

King: Henry, you're wounded. Get away.—John, you go with him.

John: No. I'm not wounded. I'm staying.

Prince Henry: My lord, you must keep attacking, for the sake of your army. They have to see you out there.

King: Yes, I will.—Westmoreland, get him out of here.

Westmoreland *(To Prince Henry)*: Come, sir, I'll take you to your tent.

Prince Henry: Forget it. It's just a scratch.

John: Let's not argue about it. Come on, Westmoreland, we have to keep fighting.

(Prince John and Westmoreland leave.)

Prince Henry: Go get 'em, bro! Let 'em know who you are! You're John of Lancaster—ha, ha!—My brother. I never realized how brave he was until today.

King: He fought with young Percy, believe it or not. He almost killed him, too.

Prince Henry: Good man!—Wait. I'll be right back.

(Prince Henry leaves. Then Douglas comes in.)

Douglas: What are you, another impostor?

King: Impostor? I'm the King! And today you die, Douglas!

Douglas: I'll kill you, whoever you are!

(They fight. Douglas is winning when Prince Henry returns.)

Prince Henry: Douglas! I've got you now!

(They fight. Douglas flees.)

Prince Henry: Are you all right?

King: Yes. You saved my life. No one will ever speak ill of you again.—My son—and future King.

Prince Henry: Lord Gawsey is in trouble. He needs reinforcements. And so does Clifton.

King: You go to Clifton. I'll go to Gawsey.

(The King leaves. Then Hotspur comes in. For a moment Prince Henry and Hotspur face each other across the stage, swords drawn. [This is a good moment for the Director to do something creative with lighting or sound effects, to freeze the action briefly.])

Hotspur: Prince of Wales?

Prince Henry: Yes.—Harry Percy?

Hotspur: Yes.

Prince Henry: Somehow I knew it would come down to this. England isn't big enough for both of us.

Hotspur: Then let me send you to the next world.

(They fight. Then Falstaff comes in.)

Falstaff: Get him, Hal! Get him!

(Douglas returns and fights with Falstaff. Falstaff falls convincingly, as if dead. Douglas leaves. Prince Henry strikes Hotspur, who falls, dying.)

Hotspur: I value my life less than my glory.—But you have killed them both. *(Dies)*

Prince Henry (Kneeling beside Hotspur's body): May earth accept your body and your sins—and heaven accept your soul and your honour. I'll never face a worthier opponent.

(He removes something from his uniform and covers Percy's face. Then he sees Falstaff, apparently dead.)

Prince Henry: Poor, old Jack. I'm sorry to lose you like this. But I'll see that you get a proper burial.

(Prince Henry leaves. Then Falstaff gets up.)

Falstaff: Hold on. I'm not quite ready to be buried yet. I fooled that Scotsman Douglas. You know what they say—discretion is the better part of valour. And old Jack Falstaff knows when to be discreet.—But I don't like this guy *(Indicating Hotspur)*—even when he's dead. What if he's being discreet, too? I'd better make sure. *(He stabs Hotspur in the leg.)* There. I killed him. And who can prove otherwise?

(He picks up Hotspur. [Alternatively, Prince Henry and Prince John will help him pick up the body at the end of the scene.] Prince Henry and Prince John come in.)

John: Who's this? I thought you said your fat friend was dead.

Prince Henry: He was. At least, I thought he was.

Falstaff: Look, Hal! I killed Percy! I should get something for this, don't you think? The King could make me an earl—or even a duke.

Prince Henry: You didn't kill Percy. I did.

Falstaff: Oh!—Pfff!—How can you lie like that? I fell and he fell, but we were only out of breath, that's all. After you left, we both got up and fought with each other. He gave me a hell of a fight, but you know me, Hal. I have the instincts of a lion.

Prince Henry: You mean you have an instinct for lyin'.

John (To Prince Henry): I don't believe him.

Prince Henry: It's all right. We've won the battle. That's all I care about.—Come on, bro. Let's see who's dead and who's still alive.

(At this point Prince Henry and Prince John could help Falstaff lift the body over his shoulder. Falstaff lags behind as they leave.)

Falstaff: I should be a duke for this—or at least an earl. And then I'll live a noble life. No more vices, or crimes, or self-indulgence.—Well, not too much, anyway.

(He leaves.)

Act 5, Scene 5. *Elsewhere on the field. The King, Prince Henry, Prince John, Westmoreland, and Soldiers come in, with Worcester and Vernon as prisoners.*

King: Worcester, I blame you more than anyone else. I offered to make peace, and you told your people I wanted war. And because of you, thousands of good men are dead.

Worcester: I did what I thought was best for my own sake. Whatever you decide to do, I accept it.

King: You and Vernon will be executed.—Take them away.

(The Soldiers take Worcester and Vernon away.)

King: What's happened to Douglas?

Prince Henry: He and his men were retreating, and he took a bad fall. He was hurt pretty bad. We captured him. He's in my tent.

King: What should we do with him?

Prince Henry: Would you give me the privilege of deciding that?

King: Why not? After all, you'll be King someday.

Prince Henry: Good. I'm going to spare him. *(To Prince John)* John, set Douglas free. Let him go home.

John: Fine. I'll take care of it.

King: We still have other rebel forces to deal with.—John, you and Westmoreland will take your armies to York and deal with Northumberland and the Archbishop.—Harry, you and I will go to Wales and deal

with Glendower and Mortimer. I want to finish this business once and for all. I think after today's victory, the rebellion will collapse.—Let's go.

(They all leave. The original play ends here. But now Falstaff comes in alone with a bottle of wine, rather drunk.)

Falstaff: Earl or duke—one or the other. Duke is better, but I'll settle for earl. *(To the audience)* You people aren't rid of me yet.—You see, this most interesting story is, as they say—to be continued.

(He leaves.)

END

Posted on August 11, 2011 by Crad Kilodney, Toronto, Canada.

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